

Embrace the promise of Christ's return: *Life after Death*

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Facilitator Notes:

I wonder...

- What happens when someone dies?
- Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?
- How does the New Apostolic Church provide help for those that have died?

I believe...

- A human being consists of a body, soul, and spirit. When the body dies, soul and spirit are immortal and live on. The soul and spirit enter the realm of the dead in the same condition (proximity to or remoteness from God) as they were on earth. (Catechism Q&A questions 531, 537, 541)
- Since the sacrifice of Christ, it has been possible to change the condition of the souls in the beyond for the better. (Catechism Q&A question 543).
- Three times a year, special divine services are celebrated in which the Chief Apostle and District Apostles (and their assigned Helpers) dispense all three sacraments to the departed (who receive them as they are prepared and desire to receive them). As a believing Christian, we can pray to God that those in the beyond come to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the sacraments. (Catechism Q&A questions 659, 546)

Materials:

- IGNITE Bible
- Catechism Q&A
- Bucket, bowl, cup, water, dish sponge

References:

- Bible: Genesis 6:9-9:17, Isaiah 55:8-9, Wisdom of Solomon 2:23, John 5:25, 11:25, Romans 14:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 1 Peter 3:18-20, 2 Peter 3:9
- Catechism Q&A questions: 20, 21, 91, 92, 472, 531-548, 659
- 9th Article of Faith (Articles of Faith are found on page 251 of the Catechism Q&A)

PRE DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND STUDENT (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)

What happens when someone dies? Join us tomorrow for small group at _____ and we'll be talking about life after death.

POST DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)

Facilitator Notes:

- Please feel free to add local information and customize as necessary.

Dear Parents,

This week the "I wonder..." questions addressed life after death. While death can be a somber topic, the discussion focused around the physical death not being the end, but rather our hope for eternal life because of Jesus Christ. Consider reading Romans 14:8-9 and praying through the hope for eternal life that Jesus's sacrifice brings.

As always, if you have any question about the topic, feel free to contact us.

Your Youth Leaders

SUNDAY SERMON REFLECTIONS (up to 10 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

- Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week.

- What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?
- What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?
- So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?
- Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

HOOK (up to 10 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

- Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week.
- For the water activity, it doesn't necessarily have to be a small cup, bowl, and bucket. The idea is to show 2-3 different volumes of water with the smallest container being able to be absorbed by the sponge.
- For the sake of preparing for the discussion, the full Bible passage is included in the facilitator guide. However, in the actual discussion with the students, it is encouraged that the facilitator look up the passages in a physical Bible along with the students to reinforce the importance of using one's Bible and Bible literacy.

- How are you and how are you feeling today?
- Who would like to share their point to ponder or call to action from last week?
- Prior to the discussion, fill the cup, bowl, and bucket with water and have the sponge nearby.
- Ask the students if they think the sponge would be able to absorb the water in the smallest container. After the students have shared their answer, ask about the other two containers.
- Move the sponge from container to container showing that it absorbs the water from the smallest container, but eventually there is too much water to absorb.
 - Ultimately, a sponge would not be able to absorb all of the water in a bucket.
- Take the image a step further, ask the students if they think a household sponge would be able to absorb the entirety of an ocean.
 - Obviously the answer is "no".
- Similarly, our human understanding and intellect is limited. Even the smartest person in the world, can't fully understand the entirety and complexity of the Triune God.
 - Ask a student to read Isaiah 55:8-9
 - *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*
- Since we can't understand everything, that is why we need faith and trust.
- Today's discussion will focus on life after death and what the New Apostolic Church believes about help for the souls in the departed. Not everything about what happens after we die can be easily explained intellectually. We see what the Bible says about certain components and then exercise faith.

SET THE STAGE (1 minute)

Facilitator Notes:

- Preview the "I wonder" questions with the students.

I wonder...

- What happens when someone dies?
- Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?
- How does the New Apostolic Church provide help for those that have died?

LESSON (up to 25 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

- The term 'Apocrypha' is derived from the Greek word *apokryphos*, which means "hidden, dark". The Apocrypha ("hidden Scriptures") are biblical books that are not contained in all editions of the Bible. They represent a binding link between the Old and New Testaments, and contain statements of faith that are important for understanding the New Testament.
- The IGNITE Bible does not contain the Apocrypha.
- To reference any part of the account of Noah and the flood, see Genesis 6:9-9:17
- The fact that salvation and eternal fellowship with God are possible because of Christ's sacrifice is the 'good news' of the gospel. Consider referencing the **Help Spread the gospel** semester as a whole, or specifically **H1**. Referencing the gospel shows how the whole plan of salvation is connected.

Student Question #1 What happens when someone dies?

- A human being consists of a body, soul, and spirit. When the body dies, soul and spirit are immortal and live on. The soul and spirit enter the realm of the dead in the same condition (proximity to or remoteness from God) as they were on earth. (Catechism Q&A questions 91, 531, 537, 541)

Student Question #2 How do we know the soul and spirit are immortal?

- Ask a student to read Catechism Q&A question 531
- The answer to this question references Wisdom of Solomon 2:23
 - "For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity."
 - This verse is taken from the Apocrypha. For additional information on the Apocrypha, see Catechism Q&A questions 20 and 21.

Student Question #3 Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?

- Since the sacrifice of Christ, it has been possible to change the condition of the souls in the beyond for the better. (Catechism Q&A question 543).
- One of the primary Bible passages that supports the belief that there is help for the souls in the beyond is 1 Peter 3:18-20
- Ask a student to read 1 Peter 3:18-20
 - *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*
- In summary, when Jesus entered the realms of the departed between His death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter, this verse tells us that He went to those that died as a result of the sin flood and preached to them.
 - The New Apostolic Church teaches that what Jesus preached to these souls is consistent with what Jesus preached and taught on earth as well, salvation and eternal fellowship with God are possible because of His sacrifice.

Student Question #4 Is it really God's desire to save all souls, both living and of those that have died?

- Yes! God wants as many as possible to be saved and have eternal fellowship with Him.
- Ask a student to read 1 Timothy 2:3-6 (shown on next page)

- For the sake of preparing for the discussion, the full Bible passage is included in the facilitator guide. However, in the actual discussion with the students, it is encouraged that the facilitator look up the passages in a physical Bible along with the students to reinforce the importance of using one's Bible and Bible literacy.
- The word "longsuffering" is synonymous with "patient" and "forgiving".
- Consider reviewing the definition of a sacrament from V6 : "sacraments are fundamental acts of grace bestowed by God on a human being; sacraments are essential for salvation, at least until the day of the Lord. (Catechism Q&A question 472)
- The 9th Article of Faith also references those that have died and have hoped for and prepared for the Lord's coming. Articles of Faith can be found on page 251 of the Catechism Questions and Answers book.

- *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time..."*
- The truth mentioned here is that Jesus is the way to eternal fellowship with God.
- God has given us everything we need (His promises, ministers, preached and written Word, sacraments, community of believers, time) to develop into the bride of Christ.
- Ask a student to read John 5:25
 - *Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of god; and those who hear will live.*
- God is patient so that as many people as possible come to the decision to love Him.
- Ask a student to read 2 Peter 3:9
 - *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering* toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Student Question #5 How does the New Apostolic Church provide help for those that have died?

- Sacraments have an effect on the salvation of the soul, not the body. Because of God's divine will to save, the New Apostolic Church teaches that sacraments are also available to those souls that have passed away.
- Three times a year, special divine services are celebrated in which the Chief Apostle and District Apostles (and their assigned Helpers) dispense all three sacraments to the departed (who receive them as they are prepared and desire to receive them). As a believing Christian, we can pray to God that those in the beyond come to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the sacraments. (Catechism Q&A questions 659, 546)
 - Services for the departed (3 times a year) are different than when Holy Communion for the departed is celebrated. In divine services on Sundays and church holy days, the Chief Apostle and designated Apostles celebrate Holy Communion for the departed. Proxies (those occupying a priestly or apostle ministry) receive the sacraments on behalf of the departed because every sacrament has a physical element.
- Those souls in the realm of the departed that have received the sacraments (whether while they were alive on earth or after their body died) are considered the 'dead in Christ' that are mentioned from Eg – The Plan of Salvation. This phrase comes from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. (Catechism Q&A questions 542)
- Ask a student to read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
 - *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? (up to 10 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

In Summary

- Christ is Lord of the living and the dead
 - Ask a student to read Romans 14:8-9
 - *For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.*
- When we believe in Jesus Christ, strive to transform our nature using Jesus as our example, and depend on the grace that His sacrifice makes possible, we will justified hope in our own resurrection and eternal life.
 - Ask a student to read John 11:25
 - *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*

Close with the "I Wonder..." questions

- Review the "I wonder..." questions and "I believe..." statements.
- As you review each question and answer, stop and check in with the group to be sure there are no misunderstandings or misconceptions.

I wonder...

- What happens when someone dies?
- Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?
- How does the New Apostolic Church provide help for those that have died?

I believe...

- A human being consists of a body, soul, and spirit. When the body dies, soul and spirit are immortal and live on. The soul and spirit enter the realm of the dead in the same condition (proximity to or remoteness from God) as they were on earth. (Catechism Q&A questions 91, 92, 531, 537, 541)
- Since the sacrifice of Christ, it has been possible to change the condition of the souls in the beyond for the better. (Catechism Q&A question 543).
- Three times a year, special divine services are celebrated in which the Chief Apostle and District Apostles (and their assigned Helpers) dispense all three sacraments to the departed (who receive them as they are prepared and desire to receive them). As a believing Christian, we can pray to God that those in the beyond come to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the sacraments. (Catechism Q&A questions 659, 546)

Point to Ponder...

- Think about the fact that you've known many people in your life. Think about the amount of strangers you've seen this week (at school, the store, driving around town). Reread 1 Timothy 2:4-6. Christ died for all.

A Call to Action...

- For the next Service for the departed, start praying to God that the souls that have died and that long for the sacraments can accept the grace that God offers to them.

Additional Facilitator Notes

Death can be a difficult subject to discuss for some. In an effort to provide comfort, we sometimes may say something that is incorrect, or just pure speculation. Below are points that have been shared with the priestly ministries of the New Apostolic Church regarding phrases/ideas that are appropriate and inappropriate when conducting funerals. Please be aware of these understandings as some of these thoughts may come up in the youth discussion about life after death.

One prominent concern is over providing false assurances. As ministers, it is natural for us to have a desire to comfort those who are grieving or try to explain things that are not explainable. We must be careful, however, not to provide the bereaved, or anyone seeking answers, with false assurances when it comes to the state of the soul and future circumstances that go beyond our understanding. Only God is omniscient; only He knows the true nature and status of the deceased.

Fundamental truths and beliefs that comfort:

- God is perfect; what He does and allows is right. Because of His omniscience, He understands our grief and loneliness and will provide. Further, He alone knows this soul and will provide for its place and care in the beyond.
- God is love (1 John 4:8) and will provide strength and comfort in many ways, i.e. in His divine word, in the Holy Communion, in providing those around us as His helpers for our need, etc.
- God wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Regardless of our sinfulness and lifestyle [or that of the deceased], He will always turn and reach for us. We must also turn to Him.
- Jesus Christ is compassionate (Matthew 9:36) and full of grace and truth (John 1:14).
- Jesus is the Lord of the living and the dead (Romans 14:9, CNAC 9.6.3). Subsequently, salvation is available to those who enter into the beyond (1 Peter 3:18-20; 1 Peter 4:6; CNAC 9.6.3), and sacraments can be dispensed to them (1 Corinthians 15:29, CNAC 9.6.1). The sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing are dispensed during services for the departed for the departed desiring and prepared to receive them. In divine services on Sunday and church holy days, the Chief Apostle and designated Apostles celebrate Holy Communion for the departed. Proxies (those occupying a priestly or apostle ministry) receive the sacraments on behalf of the departed because every sacrament has a physical element.
- The power of the Holy Spirit transcends death and He works in the realms of eternity to enlighten and develop those who seek Jesus Christ.
- After physical death, the soul lives on in the realm of the dead. The term "realm" is sometimes used in connection with proximity to, or remoteness from, God (CNAC 9.5).
- The place in which a person's soul dwells after death depends upon his conduct with regard to God's will during his lifetime (Luke 16:19-31, CNAC 9.4).

We cannot stretch the truth in an effort to comfort the bereaved or try to explain something that we simply don't know.

Inappropriate

- Indicating that the deceased is "now in heaven."
- Suggesting that the deceased is "in the arms of Jesus," or that they now have a glorified body. It is our belief that they are in the same closeness to Jesus as they were when they were living (CNAC 9.5).
- Suggesting that those amongst the living need to do something to ensure the departed soul's freedom.
- Suggesting that the deceased is now an angel, flying around to help others on earth, or that they're reincarnated and living amongst us again.

For those interested, additional online courses about *Pastoral Care at the end of life* and *Understanding Greif* are available on NDI, <https://ndi.nac-usa.org>

Weekly Reflections

What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?

What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?

So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

Point to Ponder...

Call to Action...

Embrace the promise of Christ's return: *Life after Death*

<p>I wonder...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What happens when someone dies? ➤ Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed? ➤ How does the New Apostolic Church provide help for those that have died? 	<p>I believe...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A human being consists of a body, soul, and spirit. When the body dies, soul and spirit are immortal and live on. The soul and spirit enter the realm of the dead in the same condition (proximity to or remoteness from God) as they were on earth. (Catechism Q&A questions 531, 537, 541) ➤ Since the sacrifice of Christ, it has been possible to change the condition of the souls in the beyond for the better. (Catechism Q&A question 543). ➤ Three times a year, special divine services are celebrated in which the Chief Apostle and District Apostles (and their assigned Helpers) dispense all three sacraments to the departed (who receive them as they are prepared and desire to receive them). As a believing Christian, we can pray to God that those in the beyond come to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the sacraments. (Catechism Q&A questions 659, 546)
<p>Bible: Genesis 6:9-9:17, Isaiah 55:8-9, Wisdom of Solomon 2:23, John 5:25, 11:25, Romans 14:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 1 Peter 3:18-20, 2 Peter 3:9 Article of Faith 9</p>	

1. What happens when someone dies?

2. How do we know the soul and spirit are immortal?

3. Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?

4. Is it really God's desire to save all souls, both living and of those that have died?

5. How does the New Apostolic Church provide help for those that have died?

Point to Ponder: Think about the fact that you've known many people in your life. Think about the amount of strangers you've seen this week (at school, the store, driving around town). Reread 1 Timothy 2:4-6. Christ died for all.

Call to Action: For the next Service for the departed, start praying to God that the souls that have died and that long for the sacraments can accept the grace that God offers to them.